

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 126056

FOR CAVANAUGH

FOLLOWING REPEAT KABUL 3990 ACTION SECSTATE DATED MAY 16, 1978.

QUOTE: C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 3990

AIDAC

AID PASS TO STATE

E.O. 11652: GDS

SUBJECT: INITIAL MEETINGS WITH NEW AFGHAN MINISTERS BY REPRESENTATIVES OF UNDP AND WORLD BANK

1. ON APRIL 13, THE AID DIRECTOR MET SEPARATELY WITH UNDP RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE AD INTERIM, ARTHUR HOLCOMBE, AND WORLD BANK REPRESENTATIVE JAMES THEODORES (BOTH AMERICAN CITIZENS) TO DISCUSS THEIR RECENT MEETINGS WITH NEW DEVELOPMENT MINISTERS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT. BOTH STATED THAT A CONSTANT THEME IN THEIR TALKS WITH THE MINISTERS WAS THAT THEY WANTED ASSISTANCE FROM ALL SOURCES, AND THAT THEY WOULD JUDGE THE FRIENDLINESS OF FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS BY THEIR ASSISTANCE. OTHER OBSERVATIONS FROM THEIR DISCUSSIONS WITH MINISTERS FOLLOW:
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2. MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, DR. SALEH MOHAMMAD ZERAY, CITED THREE AREAS OF PRIORITY CONCERN IN AGRICULTURE: (A) INCREASING OVERALL AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AND ASSURING FOOD SECURITY; (B) LAND REFORM AND SETTLEMENT; (C) A CRASH PROGRAM FOR PLANT PROTECTION AS A RESULT OF INCREASINGLY SEVERE LOSSES THIS YEAR--AS HIGH AS 50 PERCENT LOSSES IN SOME AREAS.

3. MINISTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH SHAH WALI STRESSED THAT ALL NEW OR ADDITIONAL HEALTH FUNDS WOULD BE ALLOCATED TO THE RURAL AREAS. SPECIFICALLY, HE SAID THEY PLANNED TO PROVIDE MORE HELP TO REGIONAL CENTERS FOR TRAINING NURSES AND AUXILIARY NURSE MIDWIVES.

4. MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION MAHMUD SUMA STATED THAT EXPANSION OF PRIMARY TEACHER TRAINING WOULD BE A HIGH PRIORITY OF HIS MINISTRY, AND TOLD HOLCOMBE THAT HE WAS "COUNTING ON USAID ASSISTANCE IN THIS AREA".

5. MINISTER OF EDUCATION DASTAGIR PANJSHIRI HAS ASKED THE UNDP TO ASSIST IMMEDIATELY WITH THE CONSTRUCTION OF FIVE PROVINCIAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS, TWO OF WHICH WILL BE FOR GIRLS. THIS IS RELATED TO THE NEW GOVERNMENT'S RECENT ABOLISHMENT OF THE EIGHTH GRADE EXAMINATION WHICH, IN THE PAST, REGULATED ENTRY INTO SECONDARY SCHOOLS. HOLCOMBE STATED THAT HE WAS RECOMMENDING REALLOCATING DOLLARS 560 THOUSAND FOR THIS PURPOSE.

MINISTER PANJSHIRI SAID THAT PROBLEMS OF COORDINATION BETWEEN HIS MINISTRY AND THE MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION WERE A THING OF THE PAST. THE NEW MINISTERS WERE A "GROUP OF OLD FRIENDS WHO KNEW EACH OTHER WELL AND WITHOUT THE PETTY JEALOUSIES OF PAST MINISTERS." HE SAID THEY WOULD USE THE TELEPHONE MUCH MORE. HE ALSO SAID THE TWO MINISTRIES PLANNED TO CREATE A COORDINATING GROUP SPECIFICALLY TO DEAL WITH COMMON PROBLEMS. CONFIDENTIAL

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6. PRESIDENT OF CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM DALILI HAS ASKED THE UNDP TO STRENGTHEN ITS TOURISM AND HOTEL MANAGEMENT EFFORTS IN AFGHANISTAN. HE ALSO SAID THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT DID NOT INTEND TO PURSUE THE PREVIOUS REGIME'S PLANS TO BUILD A NEW INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT IN LOGAR. INSTEAD, THEY INTENDED TO LENGTHEN THE KABUL RUNWAY AND IMPROVE INSTRUMENTATION AND AIDS TO NAVIGATION.

7. THE MINISTER OF THE NEWLY CREATED SOCIAL AFFAIRS MINISTRY, ANAHITA RATEBZAD, STATED THAT HER MINISTRY'S RESPONSIBILITY INCLUDED ADULT EDUCATION, KINDERGARTENS, MATERNAL CHILD HEALTH, FAMILY PLANNING (AFGA), AND WOMEN'S AFFAIRS--THROUGH THE DEMOCRATIC WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION. SHE ALSO SAID THAT HER MINISTRY MIGHT IN THE FUTURE TAKE OVER THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT, BUT FOR THE PRESENT, THEY WERE TOO BUSY TO ABSORB IT. HOLCOMBE SAID HE WAS HIGHLY IMPRESSED WITH THE MINISTER'S INTELLIGENCE, ENTHUSIASM AND DEVOTION TO WOMEN'S RIGHTS. HE INDICATED THAT THE RESIDENT UNFPA EXPERT PLANNED TO TAKE IMMEDIATE STEPS TO BECOME INVOLVED WITH THIS MINISTRY.

8. SECOND DEPUTY MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS SHAH MOHAMMAD

DOST TOLD HOLCOMBE THAT THE NEW UN RES REP (HOLCOMBE HAS BEEN ACTING SINCE FEBRUARY) SHOULD BE FROM A NON-ALIGNED COUNTRY AND THAT HIS GOVERNMENT'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS A NEW CANDIDATE WOULD BE INFLUENCED BY THE QUICKNESS WITH WHICH HIS COUNTRY HAD RECOGNIZED THE REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT.

9. COMMENT: BOTH THEODORES AND HOLCOMBE REPORTED VERY SIMILAR DISCUSSIONS WITH THE VARIOUS MINISTERS, BUT CAME AWAY WITH VERY DIFFERENT ESTIMATIONS OF THE COMPETENCE OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT. HOLCOMBE WAS MUCH MORE FAVORABLY IMPRESSED BY THE GENERALLY HIGH LEVEL OF INTELLIGENCE, COMPETENCE, AND ENTHUSIASM OF SEVERAL OF THE NEW MINISTERS, AND WAS OPTIMISTIC REGARDING THE NEW DEVELOPMENT ENVIRONMENT. THEODORES WAS FAR MORE CAUTIOUS IN HIS ASSESSMENT OF THE CAPABILITIES OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT. HE
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AGREED THAT ON THE WHOLE THE NEW MINISTERS WERE INTELLIGENT AND ENTHUSIASTIC, BUT HE HAD SERIOUS RESERVATIONS REGARDING THEIR COMPETENCE. HE NOTED THAT SEVERAL HAD VIRTUALLY NO EXPERIENCE IN THEIR FIELD-- SUCH AS THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND THE MINISTER OF LABOR AND POWER. MORE FUNDAMENTALLY, HOWEVER, THEODORES SAID HE WAS VERY CONCERNED WITH REGARD TO THE CHANGES THAT WERE BEING MADE AT THE PRESIDENT AND DEPUTY PRESIDENT LEVELS--WHERE MANY EXPERIENCED, COMPETENT TECHNOCRATS WERE BEING REPLACED BY INEXPERIENCED, LESS COMPETENT PEOPLE. END SUMMARY.
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